

## *ABILITY* -- not disability

# Rheumatoid Arthritis

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Homemakers with rheumatoid arthritis want to continue their normal household duties as much as possible. This is important for their good mental health. Homemaking can provide light exercise which is essential to keep joints limber and keep up muscle tone. Work should be planned ahead to allow for adequate rest. Work should be done the easiest possible way to avoid strain.

### Sit Down Work Areas

Sitting to do kitchen chores or ironing is much less fatiguing than standing. A rheumatoid arthritic with leg and hip problems should always try to sit down to relieve strain. Most homes today have small kitchens and it is difficult to find space for a sit-down area, but even the tiniest kitchen can be adapted. Sitting to work can be a nuisance if all materials aren't at hand, because sitting and rising again is fatiguing, so gather all equipment first and then sit down.

### Drawer as a Pull Out Work Surface

A board, such as a chopping block, placed on a pulled-out drawer can be used as a work surface if the drawer is the proper height. It should go over the thighs when seated and the top of the drawer should be low enough so the hands are a little below the elbow when working. A board cut out to fit a bowl makes a convenient mixing center. See the directions for a bowl holder in Home Management for the Handicapped No. 1.

### Television Tray

A television tray fitted with a board top makes a good sit-down area especially in a small kitchen, because it can be compactly stored. The table and board can be moved to another room to be used for craft projects. The tray must be high enough to just fit over the thighs and low enough to allow the hands to work below the elbow.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- TV or snack tray and legs
- 1 piece 3/8-inch plywood approximately 20 x 25 inches
- 1 12-inch piece of shiplap

## DIRECTIONS

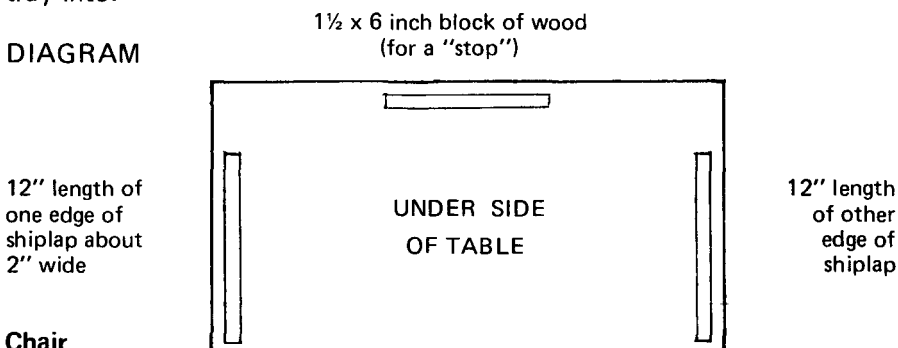
Cut a 2-inch strip from each of the grooved sides of the shi lap. This makes the grooved strips to slide the tray into. Nail these pieces to the underside of the plywood as far apart as necessary to permit the tray to slide easily into the grooves.

Nail a block of wood (approximately 1½ x 6 inches) as a "stop" near the back edge of the plywood.

Finish with varnish, wax, or paint.

If you cannot obtain shi lap, two 12 inch strips of wood of different widths nailed on top of each other will provide the grooves to slip the tray into.

## DIAGRAM



The type of chair used is a personal choice as long as it gives good support. Some people like to have chairs on casters so they can roll around the kitchen without having to get up. Arms on the chair give support and relieve strain while working and give support when rising or sitting. The chair seat should be large enough to give good firm support for the hips. Seat padding and a small pillow placed at the back make it more comfortable. Height is the most important. The seat should allow the feet to rest flat on the floor and slightly to the front. This allows the knees to be at a greater than 90 degree angle and relieves strain. The lower back should be supported so that shoulder and arm movement is not inhibited. Sitting straight with shoulders balanced directly over hips will allow a person to accomplish a lot of things, comfortably, while seated.

## Chopping

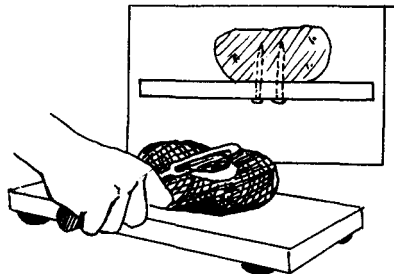
A specially made chopping block will alleviate one of the major problems for rheumatoid arthritics—prolonged or static holding. Holding anything for too long a time is tiring.

## Chopping Block with Vegetable Holder

Two aluminum nails are inserted through the bottom of this cutting board to hold vegetables for peeling and chopping.

To stabilize the board, four suction cups may be attached to the underside. A strip of wood along the front underside will fit against the counter to keep the board from moving around. A wet dishcloth folded under the board also will keep it from slipping.

Place the vegetable on the nails and peel or chop. Turn the vegetable as needed. A piece of waxed paper placed on the board first will aid in cleanup.



## Peelers

Peelers often have small handles that take too much bending and strain to grasp. When working with any utensil like this, rest hands often by stretching the fingers out flat on the counter top.

One type of peeler available in most hardware stores allows four fingers to grasp it at once and takes the strain off one or two fingers. With this type peel toward you.

## Vegetable Peeler with Enlarged Handle

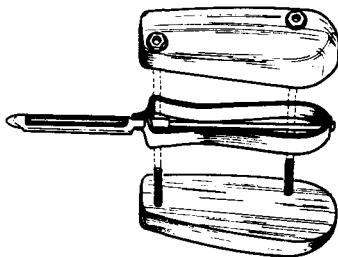
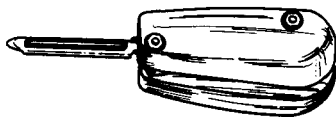
### MATERIALS NEEDED

#### Peeler

- Wood for handle. Soft wood pine is easier to shape than hardwood. 2 pieces— $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick x 2 inches x  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches.
- Bolts. 2 flat-head brass bolts size  $\frac{3}{16}$  x  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches long. Brass doesn't rust.
- Nuts. 2 brass nuts to fit the bolts.

### DIRECTIONS

Mark the wood pieces for bolt placement. Bore holes for bolts. Counter sink bolts and nuts. Insert bolts through wood and peeler handle. Tighten nuts on the other side of the handle. File off ends of bolts if rough.





## Knives

Serrated knives are easiest to use because they grip the vegetable instead of sliding off. A heavy French chef's knife will also hold the vegetable in place. Wrap one hand around the handle and push down on the blade with the other hand—with fingers extended. This distributes the weight and allows the arms to do the work. Cutting margarine or butter can be done in the same way. Push down in a rocking motion.

## Washing Dishes and Cleanup

A large sponge and flat scouring pads are preferred to dishcloths in all cleaning operations, because they allow the fingers to lie flat which is good therapy for them. Dishcloths and metal scrubbers require too much flexion. Never wring a sponge—or a cloth—in the usual manner because it tends to force the fingers in the direction of the little finger (ulnar deviation). When wringing a sponge, place it on the sink and press down with the flat of the hand or place the sponge between hands and press them together. Warm water is therapeutic for persons with rheumatoid arthritis and can help alleviate the joint pain. Dishes will seem to be lighter in weight if kept under water when being washed because water makes things buoyant.

\*Mail order houses for rehabilitation equipment:

- . Fashion Able  
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553
- . Fred Sammons, Inc.  
Box 32  
Brookfield, Illinois 60513
- . Miles Kimball  
41 West Eighth Ave.  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54091
- . Rehabilitation sections of such catalogues as  
Penney's, Sears Roebuck, and Montgomery Ward

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